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ABSTRACT

This report of two audience analyses at the University of Delaware Theatre was prepared as a guide for other university theatres that may need an understanding of the people who attend their dramatic presentations. Such analyses can provide information about who is attending the theatre, how performances are evaluated, what influences audience attendance, the effectiveness of publicity, audience preferences, reaction to theatre innovations, and frequency of attendance. Questionnaires, distributed to audiences during intermissions, were the primary method of obtaining audience reaction. The results were computerized for ease of handling the mass of data. The data indicated that "word of mouth" was one of the most effective forms of advertising and that audiences prefer some musicals in a season of theatre performances. Other information also resulted. (The texts of the questionnaires are appended.) (CH)

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DETERMINING AUDIENCE PROFILE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF PUBLICITY

CS 500 436

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INTRODUCTION

Audience analysis is not a new concept in theatre. Playbill Inc. has compiled and issued surveys annually since 1955.[1] An analysis of the Guthrie Theatre was made in 1963.[2] The UCLA Theatre carried out a subscribers analysis in 1964.[3] Other analyses have been conducted as thesis and dissertation projects.

The reasons for conducting audience analyses are several. First, such analyses can indicate who is attending theatre and who is being deprived of the experience. Second, audience analyses can provide information about how performances are received. Third, data about what influences audience attendance can be obtained. Fourth, information can be gathered about the effectiveness of publicity. Fifth, audience preferences can be determined. Sixth, reaction to theatre innovations can be gauged. Seventh, frequency of attendance can be examined. In sum, audience analysis can furnish much information about theatre audiences.

The purpose of this paper is to report on two audience analyses which were conducted at the University of Delaware Theatre. The report includes a description of the procedures used in completing the analyses, a summary of the results of the analyses, a discussion of how the results were implemented and copies of the questionnaires used in the analyses.

PROCEDURES

Prior to the performances an announcement was made requesting audience cooperation in completing questionnaires which would be distributed during intermission. In this announcement it was explained that questionnaires and pencils would be distributed at the beginning and collected at the end of a fifteen to twenty minute intermission. It was stated that the questionnaire could be completed in from five to eight minutes thus leaving sufficient time for refreshments.

During the intermission a team of 5 to 10 ushers distributed and later collected the questionnaires in an efficient, effective manner. This method of distribution and collection virtually eliminated the loss of completed questionnaires.

The data from the completed questionnaires was transferred to computer scan sheets and submitted for computer analysis.

QUESTIONNAIRE ONE

The first questionnaire was completed by audiences attending Friday and Saturday evening performances of Harold Pinter's The Homecoming during the Spring of 1971. The questionnaire and a numerical listing of the responses to each question can be found in Appendix A. The primary purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain a profile of the audience attending the University of Delaware Theatre. The questionnaire also sought information about what motivated the audience to attend The Homecoming, how well they were enjoying the performance, whether they planned refreshments before or after the play and any additional comments they cared to make.

In general, the data collected indicated that the audience which attended the play was composed of slightly more females than males, that a two-thirds majority was single, that three-fourths had no children, that a two-thirds majority was in the eighteen to twenty-five age category, that slightly more than half the audience was college students, that most of the audience had some college education, that the total family income of the majority of the audience members ranged between ten and twenty thousand dollars and that most lived within five miles of the theatre.

When the audience members were asked which one or more of several ways they heard about the play over fifty per cent indicated that they had heard about it from a husband, wife or friend. Fifty per cent had learned of the performance from posters, thirty per cent had read about the play in critical reviews, thirty per cent had seen newspaper ads and thirty per cent had read newspaper stories. Very few members of the audience had heard the radio announcements or received the mail flyers. Thirty-six per cent of the audience indicated that the one factor which motivated them to attend the performance was a husband, wife or friend. Seventeen per cent said that the primary factor motivating their attendance was the name of the play or playwright. Newspaper ads, mail flyers and radio announcements were the least often mentioned factors motivating attendace.

A majority of the audience indicated that their favorite type of play was comedy or musical comedy. Nevertheless, the vast majority indicated that they were enjoying The Homecoming and that the play was meeting their fairly high expectations.

Most of the audience had purchased their tickets in person and while few had gone out to dinner prior to the play, many planned on refreshments after the play.

Many audience members wrote additional comments at the end of the questionnaire in the space provided. A large number of the comments complained about the physical plant, especially the seating and acoustics. Most comments about the play were favorable but some complained that it was "obscure", "weird" and "too far out." Comments about the acting were generally favorable but one audience member wanted the pace quickened and another felt that the acting was uneven. The direction was mentioned infrequently but in a complimentary fashion, the set and lighting were generally praised and several audience members called for "more musical comedies."

QUESTIONNAIRE TWO

The second questionnaire was completed by audiences attending Friday and Saturday evening performances of Henry IV, Part I during the Winter of 1972. Appendix B contains the questionnaire and a numerical listing of the responses to each question. The purposes of this questionnaire were to learn about the audience's motivations for attending the play, to discover their reactions to the production, to determine their feeling about direct audience participation in a production, to learn how reviews affect the way they respond to a production, and to determine what they want from theatre and what they feel they are getting from theatre.

Responses on the questionnaires indicated that the audience which attended the Friday and Saturday evening performances of Henry IV, Part I was composed of about ten per cent more females than males and that seventy per cent of that audience was in the eighteen to twenty-five age category. Nearly one half of this audience indicated that the one factor which most influenced their attendance was that it provided an evening's entertainment. Eighty per cent of the audience said that they found the production of Henry IV, Part I to be interesting or stimulating.

Reaction to direct audience participation in a play was generally negative. About eighty per cent of the audience members indicated that it frightened them and that it is not necessary. Over seventy per cent indicated that they prefered to just watch and listen while in the theatre. Also, while about fifty per cent of the audience indicated that they would like to feel free to respond openly but needed encouragement to do so, the other fifty per cent indicated that they resent being urged to participate.

In response to questions asked on the questionnaire sixty per cent of the audience members indicated that they read reviews, and fifty-seven per cent said that they prefered not to read reviews prior to attending a production. Nearly seventy per cent of the respondents said that a favorable review could significantly increase their desire to see a show. Eighty per cent of the respondents indicated that they felt that reviews did not significantly influence their opinion of a production.

Entertainment, intellectual stimulation and a moving experience were what the audience said they wanted most from theatre and a distinct preference was shown for entertainment. Very few members of the audience expressed the desire for theatre to heighten their awareness of social issues. Ninety-eight per cent of the audience members indicated that they were getting entertainment from theatre, eighty-six per cent said that they were getting intellectual stimulation, seventy per cent felt that they were getting heightened awareness of social issues. In response to the question, "Is theatre a necessary part of your life?" forty-three per cent of the audience members responded "yes" and fifty-seven per cent responded "no".

The comments written in the space provided on this second questionnaire were quite similar to the comments made on the first questionnaire. The physical plant was again criticized, the acting, direction, set and lighting were again generally praised and some audience members again called for "more musical comedies." However, no one complained that the play was "weird" or "far out."

DISCUSSION

The results of the audience analyses completed at the University of Delaware precipitated the following actions.

1. Since radio and mail flyer advertizing were found to be largely ineffective in informing people about performances or motivating attendance such advertizing was curtailed.

2. "Word of mouth" appeared to be one of the most effective forms of advertizing. In an attempt to employ this phenomenon to increase audience size new groups were invited to attend the theatre free of charge.

3. Married audience members were found to buy tickets by mail. To facilitate such ticket purchases mail coupons were included in newspaper advertizing.

4. Because audiences expressed an aversion to audience participation, inclusion of this technique in the theatre season was postponed.

5. The University administration was informed of the complaints about the theatre facilities and some funds have been allocated for remodeling.

6. Musicals were added to the theatre season to meet audience demand.

It is believed that the actions mentioned above contributed significantly to the fifty per cent increase in theatre attendance which occurred between the 1970 and the 1973 theatre seasons.

The theatre audiences at the University of Delaware seemed to enjoy completing the questionnaires during intermission. The only question which a sizeable number of people refused to answer concerned total family income. The only complaints made were that some questions on the questionnaire were vague and that the questionnaire was repetitious.

It should be noted that the use of the computer to tabulate the data gathered by the questionnaire greatly simplified and speeded the tabulation process. It was hereby possible to complete analyses which otherwise would not have been feasible because of the tremendous amount of time and effort which would have been required to make the necessary tabulations. Thus, computerized analysis of the questionnaire data made it possible to determine not only the responses of the general population (all those people who completed the questionnaire) but also the responses of designated sub-populations (married, over fifty, income 10-12 thousand dollars, etc.)

Plans have been made to continue computerized audience analyses at the University of Delaware. The procedure is recommended to you.

NOTES

1 Playbill survey, "Who's Who in the Audience," compiled and issued annually since 1955 by Playbill, Inc., New York.

2 UCLA Theatre Subscribers' Analysis, Winter 1964, carried out by UCLA Theatre, University of California, Los Angeles, unpublished.

3 Guthrie Theatre survey. "Analysis of the Guthrie Theatre Audience," December 1963, Twin Cities Marketing and Research Department of Bratten, Barton, Durstine and Osborn, Inc.

Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

We are attempting to obtain a profile of the audiences attending University Theatre productions so that we may provide you with better theatrical experiences. Please help us to obtain the profile by completing this questionnaire during intermission. Circle the appropriate letter or fill in the appropriate spaces below. Do not sign your name.

	N	%	Total Responses
1. Are you			
A. Male	341	45.3	
B. Female	412	54.7	753
2. Are you			
A. Married	248	33.0	
B. Single	501	67.0	749
3. Number of Children			
A. 0	552	74.0	
B. 1	30	4.0	
C. 2	62	8.3	
D. 3	68	9.1	746
E. 4 or more	34	5.6	
4. What is your approximate age?			
A. Under 18	22	3	
B. 18-25	485	65	
C. 26-35	105	14	
D. 36-49	92	12	748
E. 50 or over	44	6	
5. Which of these classifications best describes your present occupation?			
A. High School Student	27	4	
B. University Student	435	58	
C. Housewife	71	9	
D. Retired	10	1	
E. Professional (Doctor, Lawyer, Musician, Teacher, Etc.)	119	16	752
F. Business (Executive, Owner, Sales, Etc.)	23	3	
G. Sales Clerk/Clerical/Secretarial	20	3	
H. Craftsman/Foreman/Worker	13	2	
I. Technical	15	2	
J. Other (Specify) _____	19	3	

6. What is the last grade in school you completed? (Check one even if you're still in school)

A. 8 or less	2	0.2	
B. 9-11	26	3.5	
C. 12 (High School Graduate)	101	13.4	
D. Attended College	303	40.3	
E. 2-year Associate Degree	31	4.1	752
F. Four Year College Graduate	135	18.0	
G. Post Graduate	131	17.4	
H. Other (Specify) _____	23	3.0	

7. In which group did your total family income (before taxes) for last year fall?

A. Under $3,000	63	9.7	
B. $3,000 - $4,999	26	4.0	
C. $5,000 - $6,999	22	3.4	
D. $7,000 - $9,999	62	9.6	
E. $10,000 - $14,999	178	27.4	649
F. $15,000 - $24,999	227	35.0	
G. $25,000 - $49,999	65	10.0	
H. $50,000 and over	6	.9	

8. How far is it from your present residence to this theatre?

A. 0 - 1 mile	377	50.0	
B. 1 - 5 miles	146	19.3	
C. 5 - 10 miles	71	9.4	
D. 11 - 20 miles	88	11.6	755
E. 21 - 30 miles	31	4.1	
F. 31 miles and over	42	5.5	

How did you hear about tonight's performance?

9. Husband, wife, friend

A. Yes	408	54.4	
B. No	342	45.6	750

10. Critical Reviews

A. Yes	218	29.0	
B. No	533	71.0	751

11. Newspaper Ads

A. Yes	274	36.7	
B. No	473	63.3	747

12. Newspaper Stories

A. Yes	208	27.8	
B. No	540	72.2	748

13. Radio Announcements

A. Yes	48	6.4	751
B. No	703	93.6	

14. Posters

A. Yes	373	49.7	751
B. No	378	50.3	

15. Mail Flyers

A. Yes	63	8.4	751
B. No	688	90.6	

16. Other (Specify) _____

17. What one factor motivated you to attend tonight's performance?

A. Husband, wife, friend	272	36.5	746
B. Name of play or playwright	131	17.6	
C. Relative or friend in production	24	3.2	
D. Critical Reviews	34	4.6	
E. Newspaper Ads	16	2.1	
F. Newspaper Stories	39	5.2	
G. Posters	33	4.4	
H. Mail Flyers	6	.8	
I. Radio Announcements	1	.1	
J. Other (Specify) _____	190	25.5	

18. Did you go out to dinner before the performance?

A. Yes	120	16.0	751
B. No	631	84.0	

19. Will you go out for refreshments after the performance?

A. Yes	445	62.1	717
B. No	272	37.9	

20. How was your ticket purchased?

A. By mail	23	3.1	740
B. Season	72	9.7	
C. In person	410	55.4	
D. Telephone	99	13.4	
E. Friend	136	18.4	

21. How are you enjoying tonight's performance?

A. Extremely well	146	19.6	
B. Very well	290	39.0	
C. Fairly well	239	32.1	745
D. Not too well	57	7.7	
E. Not at all	13	1.7	

22. How would you describe your expectations about tonight's performance?

A. Very high	85	11.4	
B. High	316	42.4	
C. Moderate	308	41.3	745
D. Low	30	4.0	
E. Very low	6	.8	

23. How does this play compare with your expectations?

A. Much better than I expected	93	12.8	
B. Better than I expected	237	32.6	
C. About what I expected	287	39.5	726
D. Not as good as I expected	99	13.6	
E. Much poorer than I expected	10	1.4	

24. What is your <u>one</u> favorite type of play?

A. Comedy	245	35.7	
B. Tragedy	101	14.7	
C. Musical Comedy	161	23.5	686
D. Experimental	106	15.5	
E. Other (Specify) _____	73	10.6	

25. How many University Theatre productions (not E-52 Laboratory) have you seen this year?

A. 1	351	50.1	
B. 2	152	21.7	700
C. 3	105	15.0	
D. 4	92	13.1	

26. Which <u>one</u> type of event do you attend most often?

A. Live theatre	113	16.3	
B. Sports events	94	13.6	
C. Musical programs	81	11.7	691
D. Guest speakers	39	5.6	
E. Movies	364	52.7	

27. Please give us any specific comments you have about the University Theatre (use the back of paper if necessary).

Appendix B

QUESTIONNAIRE

We are attempting to obtain a profile of the audiences attending University Theatre productions so that we may provide you with better theatrical experiences. Please help us to obtain the profile by completing this questionnaire during intermission. Circle the appropriate letter or fill in the appropriate spaces below. Do no sign your name.

	N	%	Total Responses
1. Did you complete a questionnaire for last spring's production of The Homecoming at the University of Delaware Theatre?			
A. Yes	61	10.4	
B. No	526	89.6	587
2. Are you			
A. Male	264	45.4	
B. Female	318	54.6	582
3. What is your approximate age?			
A. Under 18	35	6.0	
B. 18 - 25	414	70.4	
C. 26 - 35	55	9.4	
D. 36 - 49	51	8.7	588
E. 50 or over	33	5.6	
4. How many times have you been to any theatre in the past year?			
A. 1 - 3	301	51.7	
B. 4 - 6	157	27.0	
C. Over 6	124	21.3	582
5. Why did you come to Henry IV, Part I? Check the one most influential factor.			
A. It provided an evening's entertainment	272	47.9	
B. I wanted to take my mind off my problems	10	1.8	
C. I wanted to broaden myself culturally	44	7.7	
D. It was a requirement for school	38	6.7	
E. There was nothing better to do	13	2.3	568
F. I hoped to be enlightened in some respect	49	8.6	
G. Other (Specify) _____	142	25.0	
6. Had you read Henry IV, Part I before attending?			
A. Yes	250	42.6	
B. No	337	57.4	587
7. How long ago?			
A. Within 6 months	91	34.6	
B. Longer than 6 months	172	65.4	263

8. Do you prefer to have read a play before attending?

A. Yes	422	75.6	558
B. No	136	24.4	

9. How many other Shakespearean productions have you seen?

A. 0	53	9.0	587
B. 1 - 3	296	50.4	
C. 4 - 6	123	21.0	
D. Over 6	115	19.6	

10. Which one of the following best describes your reaction to the Shakespearean productions you have seen in the past?

A. Boring	7	1.3	537
B. Didn't understand it	29	5.4	
C. Interesting	300	55.9	
D. Stimulating	155	28.9	
E. Not meaningful today	8	1.5	
F. Other (Specify) _____	38	7.1	

11. So far, which one of the following best describes your reaction to this production of Henry IV, Part I?

A. Boring	9	1.8	
B. Don't understand it	44	8.7	
C. Interesting	273	53.7	
D. Stimulating	133	26.2	
E. Not meaningful today	1	.2	
F. Other (Specify) _____			

12. Do you feel it is necessary to adapt Shakespeare for him to speak to our time in a meaningful way?

A. Yes	96	17.3	552
B. No	456	82.3	

The following series of questions (13-18) concerns your feeling about direct audience participation in a production. Please circle Yes or No.

13. It frightens me

A. Yes	116	20.6	564
B. No	448	79.4	

14. It is necessary

A. Yes	94	17.1	551
B. No	457	82.9	

15. I would like to feel free to respond openly (physically, vocally, emotionally) as I experience a production

A. Yes	260	48.5	536
B. No	276	51.5	

16. I prefer to just watch and listen while in the theatre

A. Yes	382	72.2	529
B. No	147	27.8	

17. I need and appreciate encouragement in order to participate

A. Yes	261	49.0	533
B. No	272	51.0	

18. I resent being urged to participate

A. Yes	281	50.4	557
B. No	275	49.4	

The following series of questions (19-23) concerns how reveiws affect the way you respond to a production. Please circle Yes or No.

19. I usually read reviews

A. Yes	340	58.9	577
B. No	237	41.1	

20. I prefer to read a review before attending a production

A. Yes	238	42.3	562
B. No	324	57.7	

21. A favorable review significantly increases my desire to see that show

A. Yes	390	68.9	566
B. No	176	31.1	

22. A negative review significantly decreases my desire to see that show

A. Yes	207	37.2	557
B. No	350	62.8	

23. Reviews significantly influence my opinions of a production

A. Yes	108	19.4	558
B. No	450	80.6	

24. Which <u>one</u> of the following do you want <u>most</u> from theatre?

A. Entertainment	295	52.4	
B. Intellectual stimulation	125	22.2	
C. Moving experience	109	19.4	563
D. Heightened awareness of social issues	10	1.8	
E. Other (Specify) _____	24	4.3	

25. Which <u>one</u> of the following is the <u>second</u> most important thing you want from theatre?

A. Entertainment	142	25.4	
B. Intellectual stimulation	222	39.6	
C. Moving experience	136	24.3	555
D. Heightened awareness of social issues	39	7.0	
E. Other (Specify)_____			

26. Which one of the following is the third most important thing you want from theatre?

A. Entertainment	113	21.0	
B. Intellectual stimulation	140	26.0	
C. Moving experience	167	31.0	538
D. Heightened awareness of social issues	98	18.2	
E. Other (Specify) _____	19	3.5	

In general, what are you getting from theatre? Please circle Yes or No for 27-31.

27. Entertainment

A. Yes	555	98.1	566
B. No	11	1.9	

28. Intellectual stimulation

A. Yes	475	86.5	549
B. No	74	13.5	

29. Moving experience

A. Yes	378	70.7	535
B. No	157	29.3	

30. Heightened awareness of social issues

A. Yes	221	41.1	555
B. No	305	57.8	

31. Other (Specify) 50

32. Is theatre a necessary part of your life?

A. Yes	239	43.1	555
B. No	314	56.6	

33. Which one of the following best describes your opinion of the University of Delaware Theatre?

A. Boring	1	.2	
B. Mediocre	51	9.8	
C. Safe	127	24.3	521
D. Stimulating	205	39.2	
E. Avant-garde	18	3.4	
F. Other (Specify)	119	22.8	

34. Please comment briefly on your expectations of the University of Delaware Theatre and whether or not those expectations are being met.